



CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF
THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS
TO
SERGEANT JOSE M. RIOS

Sergeant Jose M. Rios distinguished himself by heroism while participating in aerial flight as Pararescue Specialist, 71st Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron, Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska, in the Gulf of Alaska on 4 October 1980. On that date, Sergeant Rios's exemplary knowledge and outstanding airmanship, displayed under extremely hazardous conditions, culminated in successful actions in one of the greatest sea rescues in modern history. The cruise ship Prinsendam had caught fire and was in a desperate situation 120 miles at sea in the Gulf of Alaska with 519 persons, many elderly, on board. Facing night flying with low ceilings and rain, 25-foot sea swells, numerous air refuelings, transitioning the hazardous Alaskan mountain passes and 45-degree ocean water temperatures, he assisted in hoisting 61 survivors to safety from a tossing lifeboat. Additionally, he remained aboard a lifeboat for hours, performing invaluable survival and medical treatment. The outstanding heroism and selfless devotion to duty displayed by Sergeant Rios reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

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